

DATA SHEET PH0294543

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEP 9 1975

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

OCT 30 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

~~Keys' Ranch~~, Desert Queen Ranch, ~~(Bill)~~ McHaney Ranch

AND/OR COMMON

Bill Keys' Ranch, Keys' Ranch

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Not applicable

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Joshua Tree National Monument

☒ VICINITY OF

Twentynine Palms

Forty-third

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

California

06

San Bernardino

071

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED☒ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☒ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service - Western Region Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue - Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

STATE

California (94102)

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

San Bernardino County Recorder's Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

172 West Third Street

CITY, TOWN

San Bernardino

STATE

California (92415)

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Keys' Ranch is a complex of buildings, sheds, dams, structures, parts of automobiles, trucks, wagons, water tanks, a stamp mill, an arrastra, and pieces and parts of machinery and equipment associated with ranching and mining.

Buildings and structures include: A. Ranch House, a two storey frame shack; B. Museum/Storehouse, a recent stone and frame shed; C. Corrugated sheet-metal shed on wooden frame, badly deteriorated; D. Frame outhouse, corrugated metal roof; E. Outhouse, of recent plywood construction; F. Chicken Coop, wood frame with corrugated metal roof, deteriorated; G. Tool House Shed, recent plywood construction; H. Tack House (Tack Room), made of two wooden cyanide tanks, one placed upside down on top of other, with door cut in; I. Guest House, wood frame on rock foundation, in poor condition; J. School House, wood frame board and batten structure with no foundation, poor condition; K. Outhouse, badly collapsed; L. Arrastra - good condition if kept free of dirt and sand; M. West House (McHaney House), a badly decayed, partially collapsed wood frame board-and-batten shack with corrugated sheet metal roof; N. Adobe Barn with wood frame gable roof covered with corrugated sheet metal, with only one central portion standing, the remainder having collapsed long ago; O. Machine Shed, wood frame building with corrugated sheet metal roof, fair condition except lean-to on south end which is near collapse; P. Ore Loading Hopper, main frame beams broken by overloading, adjacent conveyor belt collapsed and in fragments; Q. Water Tank, metal tank on wooden frame, in good condition; R. Windmill, metal windmill on metal tower, with some blades of wheel missing, others bent; S. Adobe ruin, partial walls of one of two adobe buildings known to have stood east of dry stream which runs through ranch, the second adobe being represented only by almost completely "melted" adobe walls; T. South House, a wood frame structure with gable roof and exterior exposed frame, in fair condition on a good stone foundation; U. Ranch Cemetery, containing four marked graves of Wm. F. Keys, Jr., David Lynn Keys, Elsworth (sic) George Keys, and Francis (sic) May Lawton Keys, the fifth and unmarked grave presumably being that of William F. Keys Sr., the marked ones having handmade stone tombstones with turquoise inlay; V. Dam, crudely formed of concrete, with decayed wooden catwalk, the dam itself being in good condition; W. North House, a wood frame board-and-batten residence for a schoolteacher, in decayed condition; X. Dam, a secondary dam upstream from the first one designed to prevent water from escaping the reservoir through a "side door", built of concrete; Y. Outhouse, two room frame structure built of wood, in good condition; Z. Outhouse, a wood frame construction covered with corrugated sheet metal, in badly decayed condition; AA. Concrete dam, a curved miniature of Boulder Dam in good condition.

In addition the ranch contains much machinery, equipment and spare parts from both agricultural and mining industry. There are remains of a small fruit orchard. Keys utilized natural caves in surrounding hills for storage and other purposes, including one which served as his assay office. There is adobe-making machinery, a small ore crushing mill, an antique truck, an antique wagon, and myriad other historic artifacts, trash, junk, and scrap metal.

In later years Keys collected what he construed to be historic material such as old bottles, aboriginal artifacts such as manos and metates, rock and mineral specimens, and whole or fragmentary mining and agricultural machinery and parts for same, it being nearly impossible today to separate material he used legitimately in his ranching and mining interests from that which he collected simply to preserve.

Keys built most of the buildings on his ranch with material scavenged from abandoned mines and shacks elsewhere in the region, almost all were very insubstantially built, most had no foundations and rested on native soil, promoting decay, and practically none were ever painted, exposing the wood to the deteriorating effects of the desert sun and occasional rain, the ever-present desert wind, and wind-blown sand.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
— PREHISTORIC	— ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	— COMMUNITY PLANNING	— LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	— RELIGION	
— 1400-1499	— ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	— CONSERVATION	— LAW	— SCIENCE	
— 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	— ECONOMICS	— LITERATURE	— SCULPTURE	
— 1600-1699	— ARCHITECTURE	— EDUCATION	— MILITARY	— SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
— 1700-1799	— ART	— ENGINEERING	— MUSIC	— THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	— COMMERCE	— EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	— PHILOSOPHY	— TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	— COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	— POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		— INVENTION		Mining	

SPECIFIC DATES 1894 - 1969

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Bill McHaney, William F. Keys

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bill Keys' Desert Queen Ranch is of local historical significance as reflecting his career in the categories of agriculture and industry (mining). From the time he settled in the area (1910) and on this specific site (1916), William F. Keys was perhaps the most persistent rancher, farmer, and miner in the region. Others were temporarily more prominent, but none made their home in this high desert country and scratched out a living as did Bill Keys. He ran cattle, raised horses, mules, burros, and goats, cultivated a fruit orchard, built myriad dams at his ranch and elsewhere in the area to collect water from scarce and infrequent rainfall, prospected, mined, and established a lifestyle more unique than typical of other prospectors, miners, ranchers and farmers in the region.

The above statement of significance is based upon the following historical data:

William F. Keys was born on September 27, 1879 at Palisade, Nebraska. As a youth he worked in Colorado as a miner and elsewhere as a ranch hand. In Arizona he worked for the C.W. Wimmel cattle ranch and in the copper mine and smelter at Jerome. About 1900 he worked for the George Briggs cattle ranch near Needles, California, as a cowhand, and later the Conrad-Knight Cattle Company near Kingman, Arizona. He served as a deputy sheriff for Mojave County. Subsequently he turned to prospecting and mining from the Colorado River on the south to Death Valley on the north, developing several profitable claims. He became a friend of Walter "Death Valley Scotty" Scott and participated with Scott in the abortive swindle which culminated in the notorious "Battle of Wingate Pass", luckily escaping imprisonment for that episode. After 1910, Keys settled in the Twenty-nine Palms region, became a friend of the aging Bill McHaney, took care of McHaney in his declining years, and ultimately took over McHaney's Ranch, which McHaney had commenced about 1894 by constructing three adobe buildings. Beginning in 1914 or 1916, Keys commenced constructing the flimsy, wood-frame shacks which would subsequently make up Keys' Desert Queen Ranch, the only surviving original building being a fragment of McHaney's 1894 adobe barn. Keys had also taken over the Desert Queen Mine, from which he derived the name of his ranch. On October 8, 1918, Keys married Francis (sic) M. Lawton, and the couple later had seven children, three of whom died on the ranch and are buried there. Keys meanwhile expanded his original homestead from 80 to 240 acres. To educate his children he built a school and schoolteacher's house on his ranch and with county aid obtained a couple of retired Burma missionaries to teach on the ranch. Keys also became involved in a feud with some unscrupulous individuals in the county which culminated in him killing one Worth Bagley in self defense, although he was found guilty of manslaughter and sent to San Quentin Prison in 1943. San Quentin's library served as his college, giving him late in life much of what education he had. On February 28, 1950, he was paroled, and on July 26, 1956, through the efforts of Earl Stanley Gardner (author of the "Perry Mason" novels), Keys was pardoned. His wife died on January 9, 1963, and Keys died on June 29, 1969 two months short of his 90th birthday.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gordon Chappell, Robert Cox, Roger Kelly, "Keys' Desert Queen Ranch, Joshua Tree National Monument, Preservation Study." Ms. report prepared by the Historic Preservation Team, National Park Service, Western Region, 1974

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 160

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	11	577220	3767600
B	11	577300	3766840
C	11	576520	3766830
D	11	576500	3765900

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary is roughly a square, its corners delineated by the above UTM references

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian (Replaces form by F. Ross Holland, 1971)

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service - Western Region Office

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue - Box 36063

CITY OR TOWN

San Francisco

TELEPHONE

(415) 556-4165

STATE

California (9/102)

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ☒

NO ☐

NONE ☐

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ☐ National ☐ State ☒ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE

SEP 5 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

DATE

10/30/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

10/15/75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

